Marine Fish Farm: Tabhaigh East

Non-Technical Summary

Mowi Scotland Limited

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Non-Technical Summary: Tabhaigh East Marine Pen Fish Farm, Isle of Lewis

This non-technical summary (NTS) constitutes part of The Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations 2018 (EASR) Water Permit Activity application submitted by Mowi Scotland Ltd. to SEPA to seek permission to establish a marine fish farm site at Tabhaigh East, Loch Erisort, Isle of Lewis.

Overview of the Proposed Activity

Mowi Scotland Ltd. proposes the installation of a new marine pen fish farm site within the Loch Erisort complex, on the west coast of the Isle of Lewis. Currently there are three existing finfish farm sites in the eastern extent of the Loch: Tabhaigh, North Shore East, and North Shore West, with a combined maximum biomass of 6,550 tonnes. These sites are all serviced by a shorebase located at Keose Glebe, 6.7km to the south-west of the island of Tabhaigh.

The proposed new site would be located 0.35km to the east of the existing Tabhaigh fish farm site, and would be named Tabhaigh East. Two siting options were presented during pre-application engagement with regulators and stakeholders, with both options subject to environmental screening and risk assessment by SEPA. Following feedback obtained from pre application engagement, and in line with operational requirements, a final layout has been selected comprising of 8 circular pens of 160m circumference in a 2 x 4 grid configuration (100m^2 grid), with a maximum allowable biomass of 2075 tonnes sought. A new feed barge will service both the proposed development and existing Tabhaigh farm, once its site modifications are complete.

Successful planning consent and EASR licensing of Tabhaigh East would also result in the removal of, or reduction of biomass at the following sites, **resulting in no net increase of consented biomass within the Loch Erisort complex**:

- The relinquishment of the planning consent and CAR licence for the existing operational site **North Shore West**, currently consented for 1,650 tonnes biomass. The infrastructure would be removed and site fully decommissioned.

- The phased relocation of biomass from another existing site within the Loch Erisort complex - **North Shore East** (current biomass of 2,400 tonnes) - to the proposed development. This will be initially informed by the licensed biomass approved for the proposed development with subsequent relocation of remaining biomass informed by future, separate environmental assessments depending on successful operation of the proposed development and observational monitoring data.

Measures to control and prevent impact on the environment

Key topics for consideration by SEPA include benthic ecology, water quality, and interaction with wild salmonids. All topics are covered in detail within the accompanying application documents. However, in brief:

- Proposed biomass, medicine limits and pen layout sought at Tabhaigh East have been derived through an iterative process, taking account of measured local currents, sediment characteristics and bathymetry, as well as deposition, medicine dispersion and hydrodynamic modelling results. This work aligns Mowi with SEPA's regulations regarding for nutrient enhancement or water quality degradation, as well as protect the seabed habitat.
- All seabed survey results from the existing fish farms within the Loch Erisort complex in 2024 were compliant with SEPA's requirements, indicating that the environmental and hydrodynamic conditions are appropriate to support the production levels in operation currently.
- The proposed Tabhaigh East development will be subject to environmental monitoring at a minimum frequency of once every 24 months to assess compliance with seabed environmental standards. The monitoring will be in accordance with SEPA design requirements and will be detailed in a separate Environmental Monitoring Plan for the proposed development.

- Fallowing is standard practice following a production cycle, to promote recovery of the seabed benthic communities from any production impacts seabed and to break the life cycle of sea lice. The pens will be left fallow for a period of at least 28 days at the end of each production cycle.
- Mowi have a strong focus on optimising fish survival and preventing disease. Sea lice will be managed effectively and appropriately, using fallow periods and stocking strategies where possible, with further support from treatment methods as required. Non-medicinal, biological and preventative treatment strategies will be prioritised wherever possible. Licensed medicines for sea lice control are prescribed and used only when absolutely necessary, under the supervision of authorised veterinarians and fish health professionals. Fewer, large pens enable efficiencies in terms of site operations, including medicinal fish health treatments to be administered quickly and effectively with more fish being treated for gill health challenges at any one time. The proposal will also increase pen size (and therefore volume) to reduce stocking density and improve overall fish health. In-feed medicines are not planned for use at this site, and so do not form part of this application.
- The proposed development represents the relocation of stock from inner loch Erisort to an area of improved hydrological conditions and water quality, to the seaward extent of the loch. This is anticipated to decrease potential adverse interactions with wild salmonids travelling through the loch from the River Laxay system.
- In order to minimise the likelihood of damage, and subsequent fish escapes, pens, pen grids and moorings will be designed to maintain their integrity, with proposed specifications assessed and rated by Mowi suppliers for the environmental and physical characteristics of the location, in accordance with the Norwegian Standard 9415 or The Scottish Technical Standard for Finfish Aquaculture.